



Why We're Here

This has been a long time in the making for me. I got the idea to do a zine years ago, back in college after first watching Craig Smith's *Psychedelic Glue Sniffin' Hillbillies*. The interview that forms the centerpiece of this issue is the result of my undergrad obsession with that film. Viewed years later, it's just as incredible, and remains woefully unseen and unheard of, which was part of my reason for wanting to do a zine in the first place. That and off-the-cuff reviews of all the '80s noise rock records I was into at the time (and mostly still am). That part luckily hasn't made it this far.

Laziness is a pretty good excuse for not getting this done sooner, as was my uncertainty in going at it alone. With good editorial help and contributors this time around, this thing has finally become a reality. Also with said help, and a little bit of effort, the focus of the zine shifted. No more weird movies and weird abrasive music. Now anything and everything on our minds: pro wrestling, weird movies, bad hardcore 7-inches, crime fiction, blue-haired girls, children's literature, and worn out copies of our parents' classic rock LPs. Personally, the variety seems to make it all come together better, even as scattershot as that makes things seem. So too are our interests and obsessions. There is no overt irony in these pages; we mean what we say, and like what we like, trashy or shoddy as it may be. If there seems a relative focus on obscurity, it's not to hold anything over anyone's head, but rather to share cool shit more people would like if they were aware of it all. Maybe down the line we'll get some more images and a better layout. Not the priority this go around, but something to consider. For now, enjoy the art by Research, the copious small-print text, and maybe find out about a few new things, even if you hate them. As uncle Dave Meltzer says, reading is your friend. Thanks to Minoru Suzuki for posing for our cover.

Fuck Eric.

What's In that Glue Down in Keyser?

There are so many bizarre, fucked-up and wonderful underground short films to keep track of that too many are confined to obscurity. Not only are these types of films enigmatic by design in most cases, but the fact that they were almost exclusively promoted through long-forgotten and out-of-print zines and word of mouth sealed their fate. There's something inherently satisfying about discovering a strange, forgotten little film and ordering it straight from the director themselves.

Psychedelic Glue Sniffin' Hillbillies may as well have come out of nowhere, quietly arriving onto the avant-garde film scene from the seemingly-nowhere burg of Keyser, West Virginia. Then again, that's only speaking geographically, because in aesthetic terms Craig Smith's 1994 short film is part of a long tradition of outrageous, surreal cinema that includes the works of Kenneth Anger, Alejandro Jodorowsky, and even the found-footage video mixtapes of the mid-1980s. Despite its total obscurity, Keyser was alive with all sorts of post-punk era happenings in the 1980s, but Smith somehow proved to be the only filmmaker to emerge from that fertile Appalachian hamlet. Then again, it's likely that more people have heard of Keyser itself than *Psychedelic Glue Sniffin' Hillbillies*, such is the temporary nature of such obscure, alternative works of art from the recent past. While it is undoubtedly a minor film work, Smith's project is one worthy of far more attention than it has been given, and deserves the sort of rediscovery these types of underground artifacts merit every so often. Picking up the stylistic reins of his influences Anger and Jodorowsky, Smith's film blends *vérité* documentary techniques capturing the denizens of Keyser in their daily lives, with innovative, staged psychedelic vignettes to create a work unlike anything from its era or any other.

The film's voice is totally distinctive, tackling blue collar white trash lifestyles and burnout psychedelic drug culture from an equally-insider viewpoint. The key to this is the hands-off approach to the documentary/interview scenes, as well as the meticulously staged craftsmanship of the psychedelic vignettes, the contrast between which pits the two subcultures at expected odds in the world they share.

Smith's authorial voice is purely visual, establishing the two realms with which he is personally familiar, and positioning the viewer as a visitor to each as they are forced to interact. In the real world, we get interviews with Keyser locals Dutch and Jimmy, both drunk the entire film, talking about shitting in cemeteries each morning, threatening to kick various people's asses, and putting snakes in teachers' desks. In the psychedelic netherworld, mauled mothers in monster masks hold cyclopean infants, a one-eyed living Madball huffs glue and fries his own brain while slurping a 7-11 slushie, and a grump-faced character kneels at an altar of tchotchkes before blessing himself and taking a No-Doz communion. All of this is interspersed and overlaid with stock footage, pilfered TV and movie clips, and other added bonuses such as monster truck rallies, the Challenger explosion, and the title card of something called "Enema Diary." These images reoccur throughout, changing and swirling in a kaleidoscopic effect, reconfiguring just as soon as they seem to become familiar. The moment we think we have a grip on the world we're watching, the rug gets pulled out and visually satisfying disorientation takes over.

In terms of enjoyment and innovation, the film's soundtrack goes hand-in-hand with its visuals to disarm the viewer while perfectly matching the onscreen carnage. The Keyser sections are scored with obscure country tracks taken from the novelty sampler *Wavy Gravy*, another piece of '80s underground culture, providing these characters and subject matter alike with the perfect counterparts. The songs are the hits that never were and never could have been, unsuspectingly catchy country tracks in the Countrypolitan and Honky Tonk styles, but with as many songs about LSD and murder as Jesus Christ and heartbreak. These tunes, scooped up and reintroduced to the world through the comp's archival of all things weird and wonderful, never stood a chance at being recognized or successful in their day, just as the people of Keyser never found success beyond the world they always knew. The pairing and overall effect is sweet, perfectly sensible and natural where it could have been cheap and patronizing. Yet again in complete contrast are the psychedelic vignettes, which are squalling, feedback-drenched overloads of sight and sound. Interestingly, these feature the music of noise-psych guitar pioneer Helios Creed, by far the film's most

recognizable contributor. Creed's still-obscure but notable talents lend these segments an overwhelming, nightmarish quality that is wholly at odds with the relative tranquility of the scenes in Keyser and only furthers the idea of a subcultural divide.

All of these elements come together and allow the film to succeed as a whole because it offers an honest portrait of the real people of Keyser as they truly were. There is no white trash posturing, no misguided hipness anywhere to be seen--this is not *Gummo*, but instead a non-condescending portrait of humans on the fringe living on their own terms. There is no Mondo movie gawking, just real people being embraced for their eccentricities and peculiarities. Despite the near-poverty on display, there is no class-shaming, and Jimmy and Dutch speak entirely for themselves as people who are not even lost because they never allowed themselves to be put on the map in the first place. It is only in the element of filmmaking itself that the younger, artistic generation is represented, and fittingly, their segments are the satirical, over-the-top portions of the project. They could afford their own art and leisure to look foolish, but Dutch and Jimmy could not and were represented as straight-forwardly as possible (given their intoxication and awareness of the project being filmed).

All of that is great, but obscure subjects, artists and releases all add up to even more obscurity. The film itself is no different, seeing release at a few underground film festivals as well as some notice and reviews in the independent, alternative press. For the most part, however, it was self-released and direct sold to curious viewers by Craig himself; even in 2013, this was how I came across the movie. Everyone who watches the film carefully can clearly see that Craig built on the innovations of his predecessors, while imbuing the work with his own personality and interests. More than this, he pushed the Super-8 format to the very limit of its boundaries with the film's technically improbable overload of swirling, superimposed images and scenes. Finally, *PGSH* stands as a unique example of experimental film as a legitimate work of regional art, with the documentary sections proving particularly illuminating. The whole project brings avant-garde cinema to the masses, stripping away art school pretension to deliver a decidedly working class take on

experimental film. A passion project through and through, PGSH is a one-of-a-kind trip that deserves far more recognition and attention. It's beyond time for a reappraisal, folks.

I was lucky enough to make contact with Craig in 2014, and he was kind enough to answer some questions about the movie and his background as a filmmaker in Keyser. I got a world of insight into his processes as well as some cool info on the artistic scene in Keyser.

This interview was conducted between January-March 2014



VA: How did you start making films? Have you made any others than those included on the DVD?

CS: I always loved watching movies and had always wanted to make films but it was too expensive when I was young. Eventually I finished college and got a steady job, this was at the height of the VHS boom and there were tons of videos hitting the shelves. Around this time I also stumbled onto to a copy of *Film Threat* magazine that featured the super-8 films of Richard Kern and Nick Zedd and also had full page ads for a company named Super-8 Sound (now Pro 8mm). This struck a cord and I decided to grab a super-8 camera and try my hand at underground film-making. I started to research and continued to amass knowledge and the necessary equipment to get my first super-8 film made.

Psychedelic Glue Sniffin' Hillbillies was [my] first film and the first roll of film I ever shot was footage that ended up in *Psychedelic Glue Sniffin' Hillbillies*; it was the road kill footage.

VA: What was the environment like in Keyser for creative endeavors? How well did you know the people featured in the film, and how were you acquainted? Specifically Dutch, George and Harold.

CS: Keyser is a small town with a population of around 5,000. The main economic thrust of the area is a paper mill. In terms of the creative environment there were people making music of various styles; rock, bluegrass, country. At the time that I was making *Psychedelic Glue Sniffin' Hillbillies* there was a group of about 20 or 30 who had taken to the newer styles of music. This would have been the punk and post-punk bands of the era. We could listen to radio stations coming out of the Washington, DC area and that was a window into the world beyond. We always had access to these radio stations so prior to this we were exposed to acid rock, progressive rock and krautrock so we were attuned to some cool trippy vibes. I got to know George because he would come to the swimming pool where I worked as a lifeguard. Dutch [I] happened to cross paths with when he walked up on us while we were hanging out drinking in a field. Harold we met when we came across a

stack of 45s that he had independently produced. We saw that the address was in a town about 15 miles up the road from Keyser so we jumped in the car in search of Harold Noble Lewis. Once we got to the town we stopped at a 7-11 pay phone and looked his name up in the phonebook and we were able to get his exact location and we simply went to his residence and introduced ourselves.

VA: Was there any kind of a crew assisting you while shooting, or did you mainly work alone? What were the shooting conditions and how long did you generally film the interview-like segments when you could find Dutch?

CS: I basically worked alone especially in terms of setting up the lights and loading the camera and in most cases shooting the film. On one occasion my buddy Michael (Mitch) Sanders operated the camera while I did my cameo. This is the shot where I'm wearing a rubber mask and shaking hands with Dutch. The shooting conditions were sketchy in terms of lighting because the trailers and houses these guys lived in had very old electric wiring and you could blow a fuse even if you only used a single movie light. As you know, film takes more lighting than video. I got around this by using simple hardware store lights and lower wattage bulbs. The scenes of Jimmy The Kid happened to be shot in Mitch's parents' basement so there were no issues with blowing fuses but we were concerned that we could wake them up as it was shot in the early morning hours. The interviews would go for an hour or maybe two.

VA: Did you have the staged scenes (such as the No-Doz communion) planned out in your mind before shooting, or were they improvised on-location? What inspired the ritualistic nature of a lot of these segments? The psychedelic vignettes have a lot in common with your video short *In a State of Equilibrium*.

CS: I had most of these scenes worked out in my head before shooting. I would however allow things to spontaneously happen or be introduced should something present itself that I thought would enhance the scene. A good example would be some of the elements that would make up the

environment that I was filming. Some of these were shot at friends' apartments or studios so I would take the time to look around and find things to make the set look more interesting. My friends all collected various weird or kitsch items and I would dress the set with interesting or eye-catching things from their collections.

In terms of the ritualistic nature of these segments I suppose I felt it would be goofy and whacky to give the impression that No-Doz would be taken as some type of sacrament. It just struck me as funny or odd. I was also inspired by the first scene in the Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* where he shaves the women's heads in a ritualistic fashion. I wanted to evoke the same vibe but have it be completely ridiculous and goofy. Another inspiration were the films of Kenneth Anger which have a very ritualistic vibe so I wanted *PSGH* to have a goofy hillbilly version of that type of film. At some point someone described the film as backwoods Jodorowsky and I guess that's what I was going for

In a State of Equilibrium was shot after *PSGH*. It is very similar and I did this for Video Art 101. I had wanted to get some film and video college credits under my belt and this is the result. Once again this is very ritualistic with the same cosmic slop, mind disaster vibe. Since I

was shooting video I was able to use my psychedelic lightshow projections. Video requires less light so it was able capture the projections quite nicely.



VA: How did you get Helios Creed to contribute to the soundtrack? Did you have his work in mind the whole time and seek him out, or did he come to you? It sounds like you were just given Helios' blessing.

CS: You're correct that I got Helios' blessing to use his music. I had actually made the film and used his music without speaking to him directly. I did however have some friends who lived in Oakland, CA who knew Helios as he lived in San Francisco. He told them it was fine. When I was finished with the film he was touring and after a show at the 930 Club in DC I gave him a few copies on VHS while hanging out in the alley behind the club. He was very cool, he really didn't mind and was happy that someone was doing creative stuff with his music. A year later he was playing guitar in **Nik Turner's Hawkwind**. I was so psyched to see this show as I'm a huge **Helios-Chrome** and **Hawkwind** fan. I brought several VHS copies of the film with me and when he walked off the stage I went up and greeted him. He didn't recognize me so I handed him a tape and he was very enthusiastic about it and told me that they watched the video over and over on the last tour and it was a big hit with the band and everyone else he had shown it to. This was the best compliment I could have ever hoped for and we've stayed in contact ever since. In return I've supplied him with a groovy psychedelic lightshow anytime he comes through my area. It's an even trade and I'm grateful that he's such a cool guy.

I had originally planned on using some original Keyser music, **The Eggtones**, for the film but it didn't drive the film the like **Helios Creed**. I originally had envisioned it with a more homemade lo-fi sound but when I played the vignettes with **Helios Creed** the two fit together perfectly so I went with the Helios Creed.

VA: How were some of the multi-filter psychedelic effects created? I'm not too familiar with Super-8 and its processes, but it sounds like a pain having to find extra equipment and deal with its limitations. Did your search for the Craven Backwinder hold up production or did you keep working?

CS: The effects were created by exposing the film multiple times to build up the layers. You do this by rewinding the film and shooting another image over the first image that was shot. I also used several filter lenses that fit over top of the camera lens. The filters were glass and were cut like a kaleidoscope that produced the multi-image effect. These lenses were also designed so that you could rotate them and basically worked just like a kaleidoscope.

The hitch with this was that super-8 film cartridges were not designed for rewinding so you had to remove the cartridge and use a device like the Craven Backwinder. The Craven Backwinder was only meant to rewind about 3 seconds of film and I wanted much more. It took some time but I was able to get what I wanted but I had to sacrifice several rolls of film during the learning the process.

Locating a Craven Backwinder did take some time and slowed things down a bit, as there was no internet, thus no ebay, however I was able to work on other things such as the No-Doz communion and hillbilly interviews.

VA: There's a lot of TV and movie footage shot in a psychedelic style throughout the film. Did you have any specific titles or scenes in mind, or just film what was on?

CS: I had been collecting footage for about 5 years or so and knew what I had and what I wanted to use. For instance, I knew I wanted to use the flying brains with spinal cords attached from *Fiend Without a Face* for the guy frying his brain segment. At the end of that particular segment there is a shot of the Space Shuttle Challenger blowing up. I did not have this footage in my possession but I had seen it before. I finally tracked it down on a random trip to Wards to get some cleaning supplies. I noticed a rack of videos at bargain pricing and it was on a compilation tape about the space program. I also knew I wanted footage of country and western bands during the “**LSD (Made A Wreck of Me)**” song at the very beginning. That shot was from a film called *Forty Acre Feud* by

Ron Ormond. I had tons of stuff in my possession and had it all cataloged so I could access it when I needed it.



VA: How much total footage did you shoot over the course of filming? Is there anything beyond the DVD outtakes that you wanted to use for the final product but were unable to? What was going on in the outtake where Dutch seems to kick you out?

CS: I shot about an hour-and-a-half of footage. The excess experimental stuff I ended up using to project on bands playing live. There are some outtakes of the hillbilly interviews that are not used in the film and did not make it onto the DVD but the better outtakes are on the disc. The ones that never got used and did not make it on to the outtakes section of the DVD are ones that I shot but the sound was not working on the camera. After that experience I got another camera and made sure the sound was working before I shot anymore hillbilly interviews. A few shots that didn't have sound are in the film such as the scene of Harold Noble Lewis dancing to the moog version of "**Grazing in the Grass**".

The outtake where Dutch throws us out was not real. I asked him to throw us out. He was so drunk that day that his performance was not very convincing. I made the decision not to use the footage because it

was staged and I wanted to keep everything real. In addition the footage has a lot of background noise and I used a different camera so the visual aspect such as color and contrast did not match the rest of the footage.

VA: Speaking of the outtakes, I looked up the Eggtones and found out that they were part of the cassette compilation *To Hell With Athens, Georgia... This Is Keyser, West Virginia!* (Which also has a track titled “George and His Mean Dad”). Was there a unique scene for music and/or independent film in Keyser around the time of your filming and were you a part of it? What was it like? What’s the deal with Bobby Joe Hamelton and The Boufant Perimeter’s “Dimmy Da Kid”?

CS: There was a group of us in Keyser who were into music and when punk rock hit in the late 70s early 80s we started making music. The Eggtones were the first of a bunch of bands and we started recording stuff in about 1980. We were influenced by Chrome and Hawkwind so we tried to come off as a mix of those types of bands. I played sax trying to emulate Nik Turner of Hawkwind. After we started doing it others joined in and some of the participants were great musicians. The tape you are referring to *To Hell With Athens, Georgia... This Is Keyser, West Virginia!*, was put together by Bunk Nesbit who has meticulously archived much of the musical activity that was happening in Keyser during that time. He puts these out on his **Red Nail Music** label. Bunk had recorded a random conversation a few guys had with George and then did the crazy cutup treatment and I thought it would be cool to use it as audio for the portion of the DVD slideshow. Bunk is a great musician and is still making music. The **Bobby Joe Hamelton and the Boufant Perimeter’s “Dimmy Da Kid”** song was recorded at a party at about 3 AM. Bobby Joe spontaneously grabbed a microphone and did the amazing Jimmy Da Kid rap off the top of his head. Bunk was recording as usual and 25 years later he was able to email me an mp3 version to use on the Jimmy the Kid slide on the DVD. The Jimmy Da Kid rap happened in 1986 and I didn’t start making the film until 1989. George and His Mean dad must have been recorded somewhere around 1984. There was no independent film scene happening in Keyser, I just

happened to make my crazy super-8 film there because I knew the colorful characters would be great for an off the wall film.

VA: Did you have any plans to film Jimmy before your late night encounter, or was that pure coincidence that you couldn't pass up using? You mention having looked for him for some time, so did you originally envision him playing such a large part in the film? Were you close in high school? How did he react to being on camera and included in a film?

CS: I knew that I wanted to film Jimmy but I was having trouble locating him. I lived in DC at the time and would drive to Keyser with hopes of finding him and getting some footage. I was having no luck for several years, then after being delayed from driving to Keyser one evening I was finally able to leave about 3 or so hours later than I had anticipated. As luck would have it as soon as I got to Keyser I could see him in the 7-11 parking lot having some type of altercation and the police had been called. The police officers were both guys I went to school with as was Jimmy. I asked the police officers if it was ok with them for me take Jimmy home because he would not let them drive him. They said please do and he got in the car and we drove to a friend's house who had set up a spot for us to film in his parents' basement. Jimmy was happy with the arrangement because he got free beer out of the deal. We spent from about 2 AM to 4 AM filming. I kept loading film in the camera because Jimmy was non-stop action. I had known Jimmy since 6th grade and if you knew him you knew that his tough routine is not anything to get upset about. He never makes good on his threats, he was actually a cool guy and everyone in town liked him for the most part. The funny thing is he didn't even realize who I was until we walked into my friend's house where we filmed. At that point there was more light and he could see me. He was like, "Hey, Craig! How are you man, how you been!". It was about a 20 minute drive from where I picked him up to where we filmed. During the drive he was talking all this shit about, "This better not be a setup or I'll kick your ass." Then he realizes who I am and he's all happy to see me. He was a one of a kind and I knew if I could spend some time filming him I would have

something. I had no idea I would end up using so much of the footage but it was all very entertaining and I felt it set the right tone. It was a fun night. Jimmy died of a heart attack a few years ago on St. Patrick's Day. He's missed, that's for sure.



VA: How did your subjects respond to you filming them as well as your overall project in general? How much of the film's final vision were they aware of when being filmed?

CS: Dutch was basically amused by it all. I could tell he knew that I was up to some kind of oddball prankishness. If he wasn't drunk, he would just give this look like "I know what you're up to" with a wry grin. When he was drunk, he would perform a bit for the camera. Most of the footage of him that appears in the film was when he was hung over. Harold Noble Lewis the disco dancing barber loved the attention. Sadly, Jimmy was the only one who didn't die before I was done editing and he was cool with it. However, he did have the crazy notion that I had gotten rich off the film and would sometimes complain that he never saw a big

payday. I gave him all the free beer he wanted when I filmed him plus 10 bucks. I also kept him out of jail that night so I call it even.

VA: Once finished, how was the film distributed? Did you sell tapes of it yourself, or did it get screened at any festivals? What were the channels through which the film gained notice? How was the reception of it after its release?

CS: I distributed the film on VHS for back in the 90s. I took out ads in *Film Threat Video Guide* and other zines of the day like *Your Flesh* and *Psychotronic*. I sent out review tapes to most of the cool zines. I remember *High Times* said it was “one of the best party tapes ever”. It also played some festivals like the very first **New York Underground Film Festival** as well as the **Chicago Underground Film Festival**, and **Viva 8** in London. It played well in these festivals but there was one festival where half the crowd was laughing and the other half was booing. This was the first festival it ever played and I was not prepared for the booing. It really pissed me off. In retrospect that was exactly the type of polarized audience response I had hoped to get so I should have been happy.

VA: A number of the songs on the film’s soundtrack appeared on the *Wavy Gravy* compilation. Did you find the tracks on there or from another source?

CS: A guy named Eric Cheevers became my roommate during the filming of *Psychedelic Glue Sniffin’ Hillbillies* and he had a copy of *Wavy Gravy*. It was perfect for what I was doing and I lifted the Wendell Austin song, “**LSD**” and the *Hallucination Generation* radio spot. Eric has made some cool films himself. Look for *Las Historias Mas Sexy Del Mundo*, parts one and two. These were shot on 16mm and are well worth seeking out.

VA: What have you been up to in the years since *Psychedelic Glue Sniffin’ Hillbillies*?

CS: I do multimedia professionally. I'm married and have a daughter, which I enjoy immensely. I haven't done any films since then so making this DVD was a blast from the past. I was able to meld the old school stuff with the new school digital stuff. I still enjoy seeing cool psychedelic bands play live like **Hawkwind**, **Ozric Tentacles**, **Chrome** or **Acid Mothers Temple**. I've managed to do psychedelic liquid light projections for **Helios Creed/Chrome** and **Nik Turner's Hawkwind** several times. I also skateboard whenever I get the chance.

Contact Craig at craigsmith2003@yahoo.com to order the DVD, or find him on ebay.—**BVV**



A Charles Willeford Primer

Charles Willeford is one of the big names in classic crime fiction, which is funny given how little his many novels resemble standard mysteries. Hell, a handful of the books I've read feature no crimes at all, but deal in the same stripped-down prose, albeit with a terse, bitter sense of humor. In short, his novels are some of the most entertaining, revealing, and unique to fall under the general banner of crime fiction, with their unparalleled portraits of decidedly non-fringe characters placing his *oeuvre* far closer to straight-up literature than pulp sensationalism. I waited far too long to start reading his stuff, and once I did get into Willeford, I started burning through the books, reading more of his work than any other single author in the past year. Willeford has a better sense of humor and is more consistent than Jim Thompson, although the straight-forward presentation of violence and psychopathy (more often straight moral ambiguity and narcissism in Willeford's case) are certainly in the same league. Even more than Thompson, Willeford's novels are the most subversive of all crime novels, challenging the very form and style itself. These are the ones I've made it through so far, all recommended reading.

MIAMI BLUES

His "modern classic" and most famous book, written thirty years into his career. First of four books in the Hoke Moseley series, concerning a hard-luck Miami police detective. It's funny, violent, and fascinating in equal measure, and the sections from psychopath Freddie Frenger's perspective are chilling in their insights into his mindset and motivations. You can tell it was meant to be a standalone novel because it isn't actually about Hoke all that much, with less than half of the chapters concerning his pursuit of Frenger. In between the all of the chases and a memorable airport murder are some hard jabs at '80s materialism, a surprising diversion to discuss haiku poetry in-depth, and a ground-up depiction of Miami's cultural make-up. It isn't his best work, but it's one of his strangest and funniest, as well as the easiest read by far.

NEW HOPE FOR THE DEAD

The second Hoke Moseley book is a hodge-podge of smaller bits and pieces than *Miami Blues*. This is where things really start to center on Hoke and we get a better idea of his world and particular habits. It's way more scattershot than its predecessor, but there are a bunch of great moments, particularly the interactions between Hoke and his partner, Ellita. And once Hoke's daughters are dropped off by his ex-wife, things really take off and we get much stronger overall perspective. Just like with Ellita, Hoke finds himself struggling to communicate and relate with his daughters, so much so that his own children are practically strangers to him. He clearly does not know how to relate to women, and Willeford is willing to make that failure explicitly, embarrassingly clear. Getting to know Hoke better and really getting in under his skin rounds him out and smoothes out some of the rougher edges of his character, though none of his worst habits just go away. From his busted jaw and dentures, to his financial and familial woes, Hoke is a painfully human series detective, and this open vulnerability is key to his lasting appeal.

HIGH PRIEST OF CALIFORNIA

Willeford's first novel, pushed like any other dime-store pulp thriller upon its 1953 publication, is not a crime novel at all. There's plenty of amoral behavior, and a lead character that offends just about every idea of decency, but no outright crimes to be seen. Instead, this is a portrait of a womanizing used car salesman rendered in intimate, occasionally frightening detail. As Russell Haxby pursues another conquest, there are heartbreaking revelations and plenty of convoluted plot developments that play out like straight-up melodrama, but land with a wholly different impact due to the narrator's ruthlessness. The conclusion is as bleak and upsetting as it is expected, and the fact that Russell gets to hit the reset button and do it all over again while Alyce is trapped in the hell he made for her is all the more infuriating. That may read like boilerplate chauvinist crime fiction, but the fact that it's all a satire of

patriarchal capitalist society speaks volumes to Willeford's deftness as a writer. Take it from Haxby himself: "I sell fools dreams in the shape of used automobiles."

THE SHARK-INFESTED CUSTARD

Willeford's most infamous book, and also his best from what I've read so far, was written in the 1970s but shelved for being too bleak and didn't see publication until 1993, years after his death. The fact that it really is that bleak, with a blackly comic ending that is basically nihilism personified, should deter no one from reading it. The psychological insights on display are so hideous, yet so commonplace against the overall backdrop of the book, that you wonder how Willeford could be any different from his characters. This is made up of a series of novellas concerning and narrated by various members of a four-man friend group living in a singles community in Miami, and gets into the shocking mishaps that result from their behavior. The whole thing is a portrayal--not quite an investigation--of the sorts of horrendous masculine behaviors that white men of some (or even little) status continually perpetrate with no consequences. In spanning several years, the book and its sections accurately, chillingly reflects how these things can go unchecked, seem normalized in their repetition (this is particularly true of the first section). It is a hilarious, horrifying, depressing book, and there is even more to it than that. It is not a fun novel, but Willeford's style makes it read like one, at least on the surface. Because we are stuck in the heads of the participants and perpetrators, no judgement or equalization ever comes, but even a slight familiarity with Willeford will let you know where he stands on these matters. One of the best books I read in the previous year by far.

PICK-UP

I've yet to read a Willeford novel that even comes close to resembling a traditional crime story, and this is no exception. Apart from one minor instance, there isn't even a single crime in *Pick-Up*. It's actually more of

a depressing portrait of a fragile, alcoholic relationship, and it's pretty amazing at what it does. At no point do things descend into melodrama, and for the majority of its brief length it is a legitimate portrayal. The insights into Harry and Helen's lives are fascinating, believable and often heartbreaking. Especially unique are Harry's thoughts on death and his fate near the book's conclusion, something that never even comes about, emphasizing the futility of everything in his world. This one has become somewhat infamous in Willeford's bibliography for a shock reveal that comes in the last two sentences. It completely caught me off-guard and is legitimately stunning. I've seen it dismissed by some as unnecessary gimmickry, but that would suggest that the entire novel before it was not wholly successful in its aims, which is false. It still succeeds with or without the reveal, and can even function as two separate works. Most importantly, it's not just casually tossed-off, but is done with genuine artistry and makes you think back to certain events in the book, shaping your perspective in an entirely different manner, something that almost encourages an immediate reread. Details emerge and a fuller sense of cohesion forms, which explains a lot more about the world Willeford has depicted. One of the most pleasant surprises as far as my reading this year has gone.—**BVV**



AN ARTEMIS FOWL POWER RANKING

Look, I'll be real with you: I've not read most of these books in many years, and some I've not read at all. But Research wanted my Artemis Fowl power ranking, so here ya go, dude.

8/7/6/5. *The Lost Colony/The Atlantis Complex/The Time Paradox/The Last Guardian*

My God, how are there 8 of these books? I deadass have not read any of these. If I had to pick one, I would say *The Atlantis Complex*, simply because it sounds the most immediately appealing. The gang probably goes underwater and whatnot, which sounds cool. Here, I'm gonna check the Wikipedias of these books real quick and guesstimate how much I would like each of them.

OK, I'm back. To be honest, I tried reading the little plot summary of each of these books, and my head hurts. For the life of me, I cannot comprehend the overarching plot between the books (and keep in mind, I was a loyal fan through the first four). Characters from past books apparently appear in new ones, but in contexts I don't understand and that don't sound particularly fun to read about. Apparently Atlantis Complex is some kind of fairy mind sickness and has nothing to do with water at all? Fuck that, I ain't reading about that. I need my boi Artemis Fowl to have all his mental faculties at all times. No idea what Eoin Colfer was smoking during this period, but I can't imagine kids reading (or getting) any of this

4. *The Arctic Incident*

This one's cool, I guess. It introduces Opal Koboi, who's like some future evil pixie lady who's always trying to kill Artemis Fowl and the goons. The Koboi stuff doesn't really pay off until later books, as I understand it, so it seems a lil muted here. Overall, since this is the second book in the series, it plays like a rote sequel to the OG Artemis Fowl. I don't know if Colfer thought he'd make more Fowl books after

finishing this one, which explains why it feels a bit hurriedly wrapped up. It ain't bad tho.

3. *The Eternity Code*

Oh yeah, I liked this one. Artemis makes this cube computer thing and some rich fuck steals it, so they gotta steal it back... but with MAGIC. I guess the fairies get involved because the computer was made using their technology and they don't want the proprietary shit to get out. They wipe Artemis Fowl's brain at the end of it too. Sorry, but does any of this make sense to anyone? Has anyone else read these? Do I sound like an insane person trying to explain these esoteric-ass plots? Don't answer that one.

2. *The Opal Deception*

See, this is what I'm talking about with Opal Koboi. She's a god-tier villain in this one. Commander Root (like an Obi-Wan type dude for the fairy cops) ends up getting murked like a MF, and Koboi tricks Holly (the main fairy lady) into shooting the shot herself. Icy (icier than #4 tbh). Plus there's like memory loss, a park full of trolls, and this cool bit where Artemis and his butler (named Butler) steal a painting. This shit slaps, I can't lie. This is definitely the book where, if you've read everything up to this point, shit's gonna start to pay off for you in a big way. But like... it's 8 books, so I get it. I didn't finish em either. Whatever.

1. OG

I mean, how could you beat the OG? Can't have any other ones on this list without the OG *Artemis Fowl*. This is the one where everything makes sense, kind of. The book (and really the series overall) is this huge tonal mishmash - a crime/cop/mystery/fantasy/dramedy for young adult readers. But it's sweet, honestly. If you can wrap your head around any of these, it's probably this one. I hear Disney bought the movie rights, but that was years ago, so they're probably sitting on them just

letting em get all yellowed. Then again, that assumes that movie rights are made of paper. Also, there's like a cool fairy symbol language in the series, and in the first book once you learn to translate it you can find hidden messages in the book and shit. Wild.

BONUS: The Artemis Fowl Files

OK, so I think I read this like a way long time ago, and don't remember most of it, but there's this short where Holly is training to be a fairy cop on this island and she has to hit the lick on her superior who's not playing fair and doesn't want to promote her. So she hits him with the stealth and marksmanship and navigates an extremely rare and dangerous fairy-type situation to boot. That's feminist as hell, honestly; Eoin Colfer the god for that. Anyway, that story was pretty sick. I think there's a story with Mulch the dwarf hitting the lick on a tiara too, but the very idea of trying to explain that to you hurts my head.

Anyway, damn. These books are way trippier than I remember. I cannot imagine what it must be like to try and comprehend these plot points and characters without having read any or all of the books. I'm an adult with a college degree, too, I'm not even the intended audience (though I was when the first few books dropped. I remember buying *Opal Deception* in the store and everything). Overall, these books are pretty cool, and if you've got kush on deck and feel like getting confused, go for it. I got copies somewhere, I'll loan em to ya. DM me.—**MCF**



7-Inch Grab Bag Reviews

I bought \$5 mystery grab bag of 7-inches labelled “Punk” at Used Kids. I expected garbage, and got something worth less than the small amount of money I paid. I found the following deep cuts within that brown paper bag.

Mudhoney - “Something So Clear (Demo Version)” Flexidisc - I guess this is “blues punk,” but it’s definitely teetering on classic rock. Is there a piano on this? The guitar solo sucks, but as a whole, I fuck with this track heavily.

Xtramedium – *Bernard l’Hermitte* EP - The cover of this one has some kind of crustacean on it, so this could possibly be some sort of Euro-Skramz. The insert looks like some Lookout Records shit though. This sounds like if Rancid had a harmonica player. The guitar is like NOFX, and the vocals sound like Against All Authority. I’m not sure if this is in English.

I Hate This – S/T EP - Listened to this at 33 at first and it sounded like fuzzed-out hate mosh. On 45 it’s just shitty hardcore. I think this track is called “Human Virus.” The cover is a cartoon woman with a bunch of syringes in her face. Definitely the worst so far.

RNR/Fit For Abuse – Split EP - This one is on Bridge 9 Records. The first track is called “Punk’s Dead, Hardcore’s Next.” Just as I suspected, this is bitter old head music. These guys probably used to be in different bands together in the ‘80s. I bet these bands are from Cleveland. I got punched really hard in the jaw at a show like this.

Pushed Aside – S/T EP - This is like Anti-Flag, high school talent show edition. There’s an instrumental intro track, not a good call. Damn, this is boring.

Spectres - Cold War/Visions of a New World EPs - I got two separate 7-inches from this band in the grab bag. There’s a sticker on one of

them describing it as “Apocalyptic post-punk.” Hyper-political undertones aside, this band isn’t that bad. Sounds even better on 33. Definitely the best non-Mudhoney one so far. Thought before removing the needle: Wait, is this the Bravery?

Hindsight/Chip Punx – Split EP - This first band is like sober Rancid. Weak ska, no horns, the chorus on this track is just “That’s why we’re friends til we die.” It kinda slaps though, I’m not mad at this one. Side B is some stop-and-start pop-punk. The singer sounds drunk, kind of a creepy feel honestly. If this was a little slower it would sound like Joyce Manor, probably. That band is OK, but I wouldn’t recommend wearing Huaraches to one of their shows.

Straight Edge Kegger – Fuck The Kids EP - I guess this band has a Bandcamp. The song titles speak for themselves for this one: “Review This Asshole” (sic), “At Least It’s Not a Chair,” “Our Lives=Shit,” “Another S/E Anthem,” “Money Corrupts Music.” It’s worth noting that on the back cover they call October 25th, 2003 “The September 11th of Thrash.” Anyone have any ideas on what that means?

In summation, I would have probably loved all of these records had I discovered them in 2006 on an Anti-Flag message board. Some very run-of-the-mill Bush-Era Myspace punk. I’m pretty sure there was also a Pere Ubu Flexidisc that came in this bag too. The Mudhoney one rules.—**RA**





LOAF: A PREFACE

It's an album I have no doubt is in everyone's parents' record collection, one so overblown, grandiose and uncool that it fills up dollar bins in every town's record shops. The songs are on FM radio all the time, to the point that you hardly have to go out of your way to hear any track. Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell* (the first, only the first one) might just be the least cool album not by Fleetwood Mac, a pompous, overstuffed cocktail of everything excessive and unnecessary in 1970s rock music. The sort of thing that punk was supposed to kill. Well we're not very punk, and we have no discernible followers to alienate, so we're proud to trumpet the fact that *Bat Out of Hell* is one incredible album, pretty much flawless in every way. Research has about the best take on it you're going to find anywhere.—**BVV**



Y'all Wanted A Meat Loaf Essay, Here It Is

My fault, I've been putting this essay off for a minute. Last night though, I was contemplating the implications of some miscreants (bums) on the internet saying "Bohemian Rhapsody" is better than "Paradise By The Dashboard Light". I was fed up to say the least and realized I couldn't wait any longer to get these words off. Truth be told, I just got hip to Meat Loaf a few months ago. Within that short amount of time though, I've already come to the inevitable realization that *Bat Out Of Hell* is a criminally slept on masterpiece by what may be the greatest goth icon of all time.

This shit is theatrical, mane. Some real ornate, emotive bangers. The central conflict at play here is Meat Loaf as a tortured young artist who's dying to fall in love, or feel anything at all. His stories are full of impulsive compromises and last ditch efforts to hold on to something real and pure. Some real pretty boy music shit if you ask me. Come to think of it, it seems plausible that this is maybe what Drake is trying to emulate. Who knows. The point is, *Bat Out Of Hell* could have been soft and trash. Instead, it manages to be a darkly compelling and poignant effort that holds it own in the realm of goth/death rock music.

Just look at the cover of this record. This Fabio looking goon riding a deer skull emblazoned motorcycle out of a grave into the sky and there's bats and red skies and gnarled branches and all that. True heavy metal. Part of what makes the content of the album itself so enticing is its ability to project the emotions evoked by these images tangibly in a tone that manages to stay primarily amicable. A lens that casts the dark emotional undertones of the record in an alluring light. At it's core, *Bat Out Of Hell* is the lust you know will never become love. The lies you tell yourself to make the days a little less lonely. The secrets that eat away at you and keep you up at night.

As a record that holds most of its clout within the classic rock community, *Bat Out Of Hell* is not inaccessible on an emotional level. These song grapple with complex and intimate spectrums of emotions surrounding love and heartbreak. The sinister and seductive flavors conjured in the process, however, is what makes them truly special. Real talk, I can see why classic rock heads fuck with this album, though. Its lavish suites such as the titular "Bat Out Of Hell" and "Paradise By The Dashboard Light" offer pleasantly modest virtuoso instrumentation and progressive song structures that are both interesting to listen to and infectiously catchy. However beneath the surface, this is quintessential counterculture music. They gotta get some Meat Loaf shirts up in Hot Topic, I'd cop.

Don't take my word for it, though. Go find this record in your mom's basement and hit a lick. Let the chaos marinate. Your squad will eventually become very receptive to at least a couple of the tracks. Let a little frost into your heart this winter with these cuts. I got nothing else. RIP Lil Peep. Free Palestine. —**RA**



BAR REVIEW: THE LIBRARY BAR

The Library Bar

Bar type: Dive, (hell)hole-in-the-wall

Price range: \$ (half of one, if I'm being honest)

Location: North High Street, Columbus, OH (just north of Ohio State's campus)

The Library is not the sort of bar one visits, but rather the sort at which one ends up. It was, at one point, a college bar (as emphasized by the name - "I tell my parents I'm spending all my free time at the Library!" is exactly the sort of thing a freshman might find humorous to say, if only the bar would let them in). Apparently even my mother, an Ohio State alumna, set foot in this wretched pub and knocked back a few cold ones of her own. However, these days it has almost nothing to do with its collegiate surroundings. It is a veritable colony of alcoholics, burnouts and lonely souls—a sort of petri dish of foul samples from the stained nether regions of Columbus nightlife. This is not, of course, the way I would choose to describe any bar at which I have spent any amount of time as a regular patron. But that, as they say, is the Library.

The decor, evidently unchanged from my mother's most recent visit (1980-something), is dusty and largely unmaintained. Pick a dive bar cliché, this place has it: jukebox, pool table, foosball, darts, old liquor promotional material, pinball machines, a broken shuffleboard machine, a broken ATM, a golf arcade machine I've never seen anyone play. An outdoor patio, comprised largely of picnic benches and ashtrays, completes the picture. A tucked-away back corner behind the building and outside the patio is home to "the office," where regulars will smoke kush, drunkenly debate, and urinate. The overall effect is not unpleasant, and it is in this regard that the Library is inoffensive—or, at least, unremarkable. It certainly looks like it could be any other dive in town.

The drinks, though simple, are a revelation. I have not found a cheaper happy hour in Columbus, full stop. Depending on which night you

choose to enter this bar, you will be rewarded with a variety of deals. Wednesday night, for instance, is the popular "mug night"; patrons can purchase mugs of beer and refill them (on both this night and subsequent mug nights) for \$1.50 per beer. At one point, a particularly adamant friend and I stopped there for a happy hour, which blessed us with, among other things, dollar shots of tequila. Tequila, tequila, tequila. I don't think I've ever consumed more tequila at any location than I have at the Library. It is all the patrons there seem to drink, a Lethe-esque nectar that keeps the regulars regular. The bartenders don't look too pleased about pouring everybody tequila shots all the time, but then they never do.

Of course, the bar has many strong personal tics, not the least of which is its clientele. A rotating cast of characters, each with their own problems, habits, grievances and tequila drinks of choice, frequents the Library: alcoholics, addicts, burnouts, drug dealers, dropouts, shitheels, promiscuous types, hippies with tarot cards, a man named Boston Paul, and some guy who always has a chess set. Why are they all there, and so often, too? It's certainly not the atmosphere that draws a crowd like this (or maybe it is). Cleanliness is next to godliness, and God does not drink at the Library. I can't speak to the women's facilities, but all you need to know about the men's restroom is that there is a trough, and no mirror. It is not good. If you're not nose-deep into a drink, essentially the only thing to do is smoke cigarettes outside, or perhaps cause personal drama.

Overall, should you choose to visit the Library, you will drink very cheaply, and may be in for a fascinating show, a slice of life at one of Columbus's dingiest beverage halls. You might see a girl, in the course of loudly arguing with her friend, jump off a bench onto his back in an effort to drag him to the ground. You might see more than a few drug transactions, some more subtle than others. You might make friends, or catch somebody's eye. You might enjoy yourself enough to return. You might even become a regular.

Do not. In the end, it will come around, as it always does. One day you will look around, and you will see your surroundings clearly for the first

time. You will realize that the time you have spent at the Library is time you can never get back, and that your life, however satisfactory or dissatisfactory it may be, is slipping away from you, little by little. Is this bar really a hill you want to die on? Probably not. Is this a place you want to be remembered for frequenting? Probably not. If the bar and its patrons were consumed in a raging inferno, would the world be better off? Probably.

Don't drink the tequila. Don't visit the office. Stay far away. And, should you choose not to heed my words, only God can save you now. But, then again, God does not drink at the Library.—MCF



MOVIES WE WATCHED INSTEAD OF *BLUE VELVET*

Everyone loves David Lynch, or at least everyone refuses to shut up about him these days. No hate here, I'm a fan. As is Research, he just hasn't gotten around to watching *Blue Velvet* yet. It's on the DVD shelf, waiting to be seen, but we have very distracted personalities and have failed to make it happen. Let's see what we've gotten into instead. There are probably more, but who can remember?

1. *Bad Santa 2*

-Research loved this one, I'm more partial to the first film.

2. *Boat Trip*

-Hey, remember how Cuba Gooding, Jr. has an Oscar? If this doesn't devalue it, nothing can.

3. *Stagefright*

-The best Italian slasher, period. Owl heads, "Funky Drummer," and musical theater all in one.

4. *Channel 13*

-Polonia perfection.

5. *Deadbeat at Dawn*

-Ohio's best-kept filmmaking secret turns the streets of Dayton into a wasteland of white trash gang wars. A documentary.

6. *Evil in the Woods*

-This one is truly amazing, storybook horror with two separate frame narratives, a deep South narrator, and film set hijinks. A must-see.

7. The inside of our eyelids. Because we passed out while trying to watch *Blue Velvet*.

Big Vin Vader's Top Wrestling Matches of 2017

1. Kenny Omega vs. Kazuchika Okada—NJPW Dominion 6/11/17
2. Kenny Omega vs. Tetsuya Naito—G1 Climax Tournament finals
3. Katsuyori Shibata vs. Kazuchika Okada—NJPW Sakura Genesis
4. Kenny Omega vs. Kazuchika Okada—NJPW WrestleKingdom 11
5. Minoru Suzuki vs. Kazuchika Okada—NJPW Beginning in Sapporo
6. Will Ospreay vs. KUSHIDA—NJPW Best of the Super Juniors final
7. Hiromu Takahashi vs. Dragon Lee—NJPW Beginning in Osaka
8. Donovan Dijak vs. Keith Lee—PWG Battle of Los Angeles, Night 3
9. WarGames—NXT: WarGames
10. Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens—WWE Royal Rumble 2017
11. Dante Fox vs. Killshot—Hell of War Match, Ultima Lucha 3

Research Anderson's Underrated Matches of 2017

1. Hiromu Takahashi vs. Marty Scurll—ROH Global Wars: Chicago
2. Keith Lee vs. Ricochet—Evolve 81
3. Walter vs. David Starr—Beyond Wrestling Cold Brew
4. Keith Lee/Donovan Dijak/Sami Callihan vs. British Strong Style — OTT Born To Be Wasted
5. Zach Sabre Jr. vs. Matt Riddle—RevPro Uprising
6. Jay Lethal vs. Hangman Page—NJPW G1 US Special Night 1
7. Yoshi-Hashi vs. Yuji Nagata—NJPW G1 Climax Night 1
8. Asuka vs. Nikki Cross—NXT 399
9. David Starr vs. Donovan Dijak—Beyond Wrestling Americanrana
10. Rey Fenix vs. Zack Sabre Jr.—PWG Battle of Los Angeles Night 3

We Are:

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